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THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES IN THE HIGH SCHOOLS

During the last two years the study of Norwegian and Swedish has been introduced into a number of high schools in the Northwest. The study of the Scandinavian languages in this country thereby enters upon a new phase and new problems present themselves. It is particularly the status of Scandinavian as an entrance subject that is now being discussed by some of the Universities. It would seem fitting and timely therefore, that our Society should take note of these developments and add whatever facts we may have to the discussion that is going on.

At the time of the organization of this Society in May, 1911, the present writer gave a brief account of the history of Scandinavian study in American universities. He spoke then of the evidences in recent years of increased interest in the literature of the Scandinavian North and in the culture and the civilization of which that literature is an expression. The growth of such interest among teachers and educators was especially noted. I quote from that address:

"There has come a fuller recognition of the educational and cultural value of these subjects of study which has found expression in the establishing of several Scandinavian chairs and new Scandinavian departments in several of our universities. It has found expression in the introduction of Scandinavian courses in some smaller colleges where such instruction has not been given before, and in the larger number of offerings and in the increased attendance upon the courses given in those colleges where such courses have long been a part of the curriculum of instruction. And finally it finds expression in the introduction of the Scandinavian languages in a number of high schools of some of our Middle Western states". (Proceedings, p. 12).

It is clear that the introduction of these and other modern languages into our curricula of instruction is but a phase of a much wider movement, namely that of extending the educational offerings of school and college so as to include courses of study which represent a number of cultural elements

that were not represented before. These subjects are chiefly either practical in character or they represent a tendency to bring the educational scheme into closer touch with the life and the thought of the present. That is, the movement in its widest aspect is in the direction of modernizing and practicalizing the school system. On the side of the sciences it finds expression in the appearance of such courses as physiological chemistry, and much of the new work in physics and biology. In the civic-historical sciences it is represented by a large number of courses which group themselves into the three departments of knowledge of sociology, political science and commerce. In the languages we find it expressed in the effort to broaden the cultural possibilities of language instruction by the introduction of the modern languages. In the schools it is evidenced in the introduction of agriculture and other practical courses.

It is clear also that the introduction of the Scandinavian and certain other languages is but the present phase of a movement which began in this country in the sixties and which occupied considerable attention in educational circles about 1880. At that time German and French were beginning to claim a larger recognition than they had enjoyed before. At present certain other modern languages that are historically and structurally related to German and French are claiming the same recognition. It is but a new phase of the war of the ancients and the moderns.

Fifty years ago language instruction in this country was wholly confined to the classical tongues. But in the sixties German and French, and in one instance Norwegian, were added to college curricula. The growth of German and French was especially noticeable in the seventies. The American Philological Association was the central body which then united language workers and *The Journal of Philology* was the organ which represented the study and teaching of languages. That the modern languages were beginning to attract attention as a suitable field for educational effort is indicated by the publications of the Philological Association; many of the articles and reviews therein contained deal with the modern languages.

In the meantime the study of German and French had developed sufficiently to encourage teachers of these languages in the demand for a more general recognition, and the Modern Language Association was organized, the first number of whose *Publications* was issued in 1883. Their program was that German and French be placed on an equal footing with Greek and Latin. This demand inaugurated nothing less than a war between the teachers of the ancient languages and the supporters of the cause of the modern languages.

The ancients held that the new languages did not have such educational value as to warrant their introduction; in their view the modern languages possessed only inferior training value and no cultural value. The moderns maintained that the modern languages were the equals of the ancient in educational value, that they furthermore possessed certain advantages over the ancient. They said: they are living languages which represent living linguistic phenomena, and the literature to which the student is introduced through them represents the life and the thought of the present. It was undoubtedly a just demand that the moderns made at that time. Subsequent educational experience has, it will be admitted, justified every claim made then for the great educational value of modern language instruction. Since that time the majority of educators have come to hold the view that was then held only by the teachers of the modern languages. Today German and French occupy the leading place in language instruction in America. Probably four-fifths of the educational service rendered in all language instruction is given through the medium of German and French language and literature courses. It has been the way the movement of modernization and practicalization of the curriculum has expressed itself in the language work.

Now it will be granted by the most radical modern that the classics have given and are giving excellent service in education. The classical languages are characterized by a formal harmony which made them in a pre-eminent degree excellent instruments for training. The more highly inflexional language affords greater opportunity for drill in formal gram-

mar than do those that have less of grammatical forms. But it will be justly claimed for the modern languages that, what they have given up in inflexional elements has been more than replaced by a development of the syntactical and the phraseological side of the language. The training qualities of the modern languages are different in kind, but can hardly be said to be less in degree.

Down to quite recently the bulk of the work that modern languages have rendered in education has been done by German and French. But the movement has widened while modern language work has developed. As early as 1869 Norse was introduced in the University of Wisconsin; since then Scandinavian courses have been established in forty colleges and universities throughout the country.¹ And in the meantime Italian and Spanish have come to be studied extensively, Spanish having developed so rapidly since the Spanish-American war as, in some places, to outdistance French, which, in the meantime, has failed in most places to keep pace with German.

Until quite recently German and French were the only modern languages taught in the high schools. But in recent years, Norwegian and Swedish have been added in a number of high schools.² The history of this growth is briefly as follows: In the spring of 1910 a petition requesting the addition of Scandinavian to the curriculum of the high schools of Minneapolis was submitted to its school board. This petition was endorsed by seventy-five organizations representing a membership of thirty thousand.³ The petition was granted and in the fall of 1910 classes in Norwegian and Swedish were organized in the South Side High School and in the East Side High School. There were sixty-five pupils in Norwegian and forty-five in Swedish. The teachers were Scandinavians with good training in the subject and some experience in teaching, among the most able teachers in the school.⁴ Last year there were

¹ Exclusive of the Scandinavian colleges.

² And Spanish to a still larger extent.

³ Facts brought out in Professor Stomberg's paper read at the meeting in April last of The Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study, see below p. 124.

nearly 200 pupils in the Scandinavian classes in the South Side High School, about evenly divided between Norwegian and Swedish. Of these 28 were registered in the beginners' class in Norwegian and 38 in the beginners' class in Swedish. In the fall of 1911 Swedish was introduced in the North Side High School with 20 students and Norwegian and Swedish in the Central High School with 20 members each.¹ The total number of students in the four of the five high schools of Minneapolis was last year 315.¹ During the present year there are in these four schools twelve classes in Swedish with a total enrollment of 192, and ten classes in Norwegian with an enrollment of 158,² in all 22 classes with 353 pupils. In the different high schools the number is as follows: South Side: Swedish, 5 classes, 101 pupils; Norwegian, 5 classes, 92 pupils. Total 193, as against 139 in French, 270 in German and 296 in Latin.² It is significant that the number for German represents an unprecedented increase of 116 pupils.

During the year 1910-1911 school boards in seven other high schools voted the introduction of Norwegian to the courses of study. They were the following: in Minnesota, Dawson, Watson, Thief River Falls, and Spring Grove, in Iowa, Story City and Decorah; in Wisconsin, Stoughton. Swedish was introduced in the high schools of Svea and Cokato, Minnesota, and of Rockford, Ill. During 1911-12 Norwegian and Swedish were added at Henning, Minn., while the boards of the following schools voted to introduce Scandinavian and classes are taught for the first time this year: Duluth and Wilmar, Minn., La Crosse, Westby and Stanley in Wisconsin, Moline, Ill., and in the Carl Schurz High School, the Tuley High School (Norwegian) and Lake View High School (Swedish). Also in several additional high schools in Minnesota, Norwegian or Swedish has been introduced, and finally in Brooklyn and Jamestown, N. Y., Grand Forks, N. D. and Everett, Washington. During this month similar action has been taken for Swedish at the Johnson High School in St. Paul. The total number of high schools where Scandinavian languages have

¹ As brought out in Professor Stomberg's paper.

² *The Norwegian American*, Northfield, for Oct. 26, 1912.

been introduced is Minnesota, 26; Wisconsin, 5; Illinois, 6; Iowa, 4; New York, 2; North Dakota, 1; Washington, 1. In New York State it has been decided that Scandinavian is to be added to the curriculum of any high school in the state where the application for a course is made by a sufficient number to form a class. In several other cities in Wisconsin, Oregon and Washington the matter has recently been taken up.¹

Now this growth has not been with everybody's approval. There are those who do not believe in this extension of the curriculum, and the friends of Scandinavian need to be on guard against overzealousness. Scandinavian language and culture courses have long ago passed out of the experimental stage in college. But they are now on trial in the high school. In the universities it has always been hard work against many odds and there have been many disappointments. Nor will the work be less difficult in the high schools; and it will stand or fall on its merits. There is opposition to the movement in some quarters. But certainly a greater number believe in the educational wisdom of it. All I shall attempt to do here is to offer a few suggestions relative to the claims made for the Scandinavian languages and the arguments advanced against this further extension of the curriculum.

The great value of languages in the training of the young lies in the fact that here the pupil is all the time dealing with thought and the expression of thought in speech. The training value of linguistic study in secondary schools lies partly in the inflexions, that is the forms, and partly in the syntax and the phraseology, that is the ideas that are expressed. The classical languages possess in a high degree training value, because they are characterized pre-eminently by those formal harmonies of adjective and noun, and of subject and verb, in the gender, number and case of the noun and pronoun, and in the number, and person of the verb, that make them especially suited to training in formal grammar. But German, e. g., also has these same formal elements in very large measure, and offers practically the same opportunities for formal training in grammar. And if formal harmony were the badge

¹ I have at present no definite report from North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas and Michigan.

of superiority and the test of superior training value in a language one could, indeed, find still better training material in some other highly inflexional languages, some of them spoken by peoples who were and are in a comparatively low state of civilization. The reason why Latin and Greek have been studied extensively in the past is not because of their formal superiority or perfection but because of the culture elements that the study contained.

Now the formal elaborateness of a language is in itself not at all one of those culture elements; it is not in itself necessarily a mark of advanced civilization. Quite on the contrary, the classical languages in possessing these full inflexional forms, these various suffixal harmonies, retain a vast amount of grammatical machinery from a primitive period of the language, machinery which the daughter languages French, Italian and Spanish, and modern Greek have been busy ever since getting rid of. Gothic and Runic Scandinavian possessed in full measure these inflexional features, as of course did Old English and all the other Old Teutonic languages, but the corresponding modern languages have in a large measure done away with them. English, the most highly developed of all languages, has thrown off most of these early formal elements. Students of the history and the science of language do not today regard the repetition of the symbol of gender in the noun and all its modifiers as a perfect thing in language; it is a primitive thing. It took a long time to develop such coordinization of related parts, but it is by no means the goal or necessarily even a high point in linguistic growth. On the contrary, the attaching of a fixed ending to each of those parts of a word-complex that belong together in the thought is a characteristic of languages in the early stages of development. The modern Teutonic and Romance languages have grown out of that stage by getting rid of much that was useless in the old flexion and by retaining, or replacing by something new, that which was useful. And further and beyond this the modern languages have developed a vast amount of lexicographical and syntactical material which reflect the wider and more complex civilization of the present.

Now we claim for the Scandinavian languages, as we be-

lieve it can be claimed for all the Germanic and the Romance languages, that so far from having lost their training value through the giving up of so much of their inflexions, they are still the equals of the ancient in training value, by reason of what they have gained. We agree that the modern languages are more difficult to teach just as syntax and phraseology are more difficult to teach than inflexions; that they require greater training on the part of the teacher, greater skill and greater effort on his part to get the same results. That, in short, the method in modern language teaching, especially French, the Scandinavian languages and English, must be a somewhat different one from that employed in the teaching of a highly inflexional language. But that is another question, and a wholly different question from the one of the training quality that inheres in the modern languages.

On the cultural side the claim for the classics was: 1, that in classical literature the student is introduced to a civilization that could not help being of inestimable value to him, and 2, that the influence of Greece and Rome upon western civilization has been so great that some knowledge of classical civilization is a part of culture. We shall grant this and add that we believe that it would be a good thing for any boy or girl in high school to study Latin or Greek; but we believe that that good would be largely in the direction of training. The modern language men have expressed themselves upon this point long ago. I speak of the controversy here again because the classicists are again the chief opponents of this larger recognition for the Scandinavian languages and Italian.¹ We believe that most high school pupils do not in the study of the classics acquire such mastery of the grammatical complexities as to be able to read a classical text with such facility as to get real pleasure out of it. And if not, the culture derived will be little. It is not before he gets into the college that the student begins to acquire that facility in the language.

The whole question of the culture value of a language in-

¹The departments of natural science are everywhere friendly, also in most cases the departments of the civic-historical sciences and of English. The latter see in it a gain for English. The modern language men are somewhat divided but more often favorable.

volves also the principle of the interest of the student. That language is likely to be culturally the most valuable to the pupil in high school which to him possesses most of the quality of interest. And interest is largely the being able to understand the thing and bring it into relation with what he already knows; the relation it has to life, the value to him personally. This personal-practical element would generally seem to determine the interest for the student. It is for this reason that the student so often turns away from the things that seem to him remote and turns to those subjects which seem to have more immediate interest. It is for this reason that the German and French courses have grown so rapidly; here were language courses that furnished culture material that made a more direct appeal to him.¹ And as culture subjects these offered the advantage of being formally less difficult. And the likelihood of a definite return was so much greater as the formal difficulties were less.

That brings us then to the question of the practical value of the language course. By that we mean of course first of all the use the subject can be put to in practical life. Now language men admit that the practical value of foreign language study in secondary schools is in the great majority of cases very small. The classical course in high school makes no claim to practical value. But also in the modern languages the high school pupil who takes up the study of a foreign language without any previous knowledge of it does not in his high school course acquire a practical command of it. University instructors in German and French generally have the experience, and have often said so, that the student who enters with entrance credit in these languages has little or no practical command of them. Unless the student has learned the language in the home he has not acquired such ability in the language that he is able to express himself grammatically correctly. And the more inflexional the language is the

¹ If such a large proportion of students in German and French nevertheless fail to retain interest in the study one reason certainly is that the texts read have until recently generally been confined to the classical writers: the present again, which would have been the means of developing that interest, was too little represented.

less the ability acquired. The practical value that a language course has in high school is limited, except in the rarest cases, to the foreign nationality whose language is studied, where the practical use of the language in the home and in the foreign community unites with the formal study of the grammar and the literature in school. The formal course in school becomes a corrective influence, a training in the correct use of the language. Here it would seem, the educational value of language study is productive of the best results, for here and only here do we have definite training and culture value combined with that definite more tangible result, the gain in the practical use of the language.

As training subjects the languages will stand on their merits as compared with any other subject in the high school curriculum. But the question presents itself, are we to require in the language courses also a definite result for cultural and practical training? And if so how is that going to be best accomplished? I take it, that all will agree that the training value should be considered first of all. But it will also be agreed, that if language courses can be made productive of better results for culture and practical life the high school curriculum ought to be so modified or extended as to make such a result possible in a larger measure than it has been in the past. A very large percentage of high school pupils never to go college; (the average of attendance in high school is two years). The high school will not therefore disregard those subjects of instruction which can add this value to the high school course.

The first place in the high school curriculum must of course always be given to English. The place that other language courses should occupy must be determined by the value of the study to the individual student. Now in the case of English-speaking children who speak English and only English in the home the languages that have the greatest training value should perhaps in general be advised. In those cases where culture value is to be emphasized those languages which have the greatest value for English should be given the preference.

However in the case of foreign-speaking pupils the preferred place in the curriculum should in each individual case be given to the native language of the pupil if that is possible.

And it is possible if there are enough pupils of that nationality to form a class and a properly qualified teacher can be found for the subject. We believe that the pupil will acquire the greatest proficiency in that language which he speaks as his mother tongue. We believe that for him the greatest educational value will be found in the study of that language. We believe that it will, if well taught, have greater training value and far greater cultural and practical value for him than the study of any other language. The foreign student who as a child has learned a foreign tongue as the medium he employs every day in expressing his thoughts will long after that, perhaps for life, think in the terms of that language. That is a handicap to him in the learning of English; but as a citizen of an English-speaking country he must learn English and it is important that he learn it well; for an imperfect speaking knowledge of English will otherwise be a handicap for life. But just as the student whose language is English will make little progress in language study except as there is progress in English, so the foreign student will in his native language have an aid or a hindrance not only in his learning of English but in all language study according as he learns to think clearly and speak correctly his own native language. A systematic course in his own language by which he acquires a correct knowledge of it is at the same time of greater training value for him toward an understanding of grammatical principles than such a course in any other language can possibly be.

The introduction of foreign languages into high schools in communities that have a large foreign factor is therefore in the interests of greater efficiency of the high school in its language work. It is by no means to be regarded as a recognition accorded to a racial element in the community, which demands that recognition out of reasons of patriotism for their own. It may be such reasons that sometimes prompt the demand, and even that can not be wholly ignored if the nationality making the request forms an extensive part of the taxpayers of the community. But it is a more weighty reason, and one that cannot be disregarded by the high school that,

with the foreign contingent of its student body the high school will gain in efficiency and thereby serve the community the better by supplying training in these languages. And the universities must take steps to give the proper recognition to these languages where they have not already done so.

The question then arises just what form should that recognition take? Upon what basis are the Scandinavian languages (and Italian and Spanish)¹ to be accepted for entrance credit? The answer on the part of the colleges and the universities will be that these new languages will be acceptable for entrance credit if properly taught. And the universities and colleges will have the right to inspect the teaching of these new subjects in accredited schools. The status of the new languages as entrance credit will depend on whether the quality of teaching in them is equal to that in the older established languages. Now all new subjects are apt to be at a disadvantage at first; there isn't the benefit of past experience in the presenting of these subjects in the secondary schools; there are not the necessary annotated texts and class room aids to the work, and there will for a time be a lack of teachers with training in these subjects. Some of the new languages will fare much worse than others in these respects. The languages representing foreign nationalities of principally recent immigration will only with difficulty meet the requirements that must be set, among other reasons because the native colleges for the training of teachers are lacking. And the disadvantage will be greatest where the average of culture is lowest, in other words among those foreigners having a large proportion of illiterates or poorly educated and a small proportion of educated members.

On the other hand those nationalities that represent early immigration in large numbers with a high average of education, who have formed large foreign speaking communities where the native language is preserved and the native culture fostered are in a peculiarly favorable situation in this respect. And, barring German, none of the foreign nationalities are

¹I am aware that Spanish has to some extent already been given greater recognition, in response to a popular practical demand.

as favorably situated in this respect as the Scandinavians. Of the foreign nationalities in question they are the oldest in America, immigration from Norway dating back to 1825, that from Sweden to 1841. These nationalities located from the first in large numbers chiefly in the middle West, more recently in the far West and the cities in the East. In all Europe illiteracy is, as is well known, least in the Scandinavian countries, being less than 1 per cent.¹ And from the first a considerable proportion of the immigration from these countries were from among the educated classes.² Church organizations were founded early which included in their membership practically every member of the foreign community. Schools and colleges were established that are to-day among the very best in the respective localities where they are found. In these colleges the medium of instruction is usually Scandinavian; and Norwegian, or Swedish or Danish, as the case may be, occupy a prominent place in the curriculum. Scandinavian chairs or departments were early established in some of the middle western universities, more recently in others; while courses have long ago been introduced in most of the universities east and west and recently in some of the smaller colleges. The Scandinavian courses in these universities and the Scandinavian colleges aim to and offer the same kind of training that is offered in the other modern languages. Moreover some of the Universities offer graduate courses in Scandinavian languages and literatures leading to the Master's and the Doctor's degree, with courses of instruction similar to those leading to the higher degrees in other languages in American universities or in the Scandinavian languages in the universities of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. The teaching of the Scandinavian languages in the secondary schools should then be fortunately situated, infinitely more favorable than the situation was for German and French in the seventies and the early eighties. There are properly qualified teachers in Norwegian and Swedish to be had, and it rests with the high school boards engaging Scandinavian teachers

¹ Of other countries only Scotland has so little illiteracy.

² This has been true in the largest measure of the Swedes.

to get into touch with the schools and departments that can supply these teachers. Too great care cannot be exercised in the beginning by the board that selects a teacher for Scandinavian and for any new language that is introduced, or by those seeking to place teachers, as to who they recommend. These universities and colleges are represented in the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study; the officers and the editorial office of the Society stand ready at all times to aid wherever they can. The Society furthermore has a Committee on Secondary Schools, whose peculiar business it is, in part, to furnish such information and keep the Society in touch with the Scandinavian work in the secondary schools (see officers and members of this committee on page 126 below).¹ The Scandinavian departments in the universities, or the Committee on Secondary Schools spoken of above, may always be consulted with reference to securing trained teachers for Scandinavian in secondary schools.

Finally as to the present practice of the universities relative to Scandinavian for entrance. In the University of Wisconsin the language credit offered for entrance "must ordinarily be in Greek, Latin, German or French; but advanced work in another foreign language to an amount not exceeding eight credits may constitute one of the two languages on the following conditions: 1, the student must study the language more than one year. 2, only the work beyond the first year can be substituted. The first year's work will be accepted toward the credits required for graduation though not as part of the required credits of language" (Catalog, 1911-12). This ruling is based on the practice that was followed before the recent growth in Scandinavian courses in secondary schools. At Chicago University the rule is: "The University of Chicago will accept for admission any modern language which is acceptably taught in its co-operating high schools. If, for example, one of the Chicago high schools which is in co-operative

¹ The question of the training of Scandinavian teachers for the secondary schools will be reported upon by the Committee on Secondary Schools at the next annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Study.

relationship with the university certifies that a student has successfully completed 2 units of work in Swedish, such a student is, in accordance with our entrance requirements, entitled to have that certificate accepted, just as if the work had been done in German and French," (letter from the Examiner). In the University of Illinois the Scandinavian languages have, in practice, been accepted for entrance in many cases in recent years, the conditions varying somewhat in the different colleges; there has however not as yet been any definite ruling as to whether Scandinavian (and Spanish and Italian) shall be placed on a par with German and French or not.

From the University of Iowa the report is: "Scandinavian language will be accepted by the University, and by other state institutions of Iowa, in meeting entrance requirements. Announcement has not, I believe, up to the present time found its way into the catalogue, but there is general understanding that Scandinavian properly taught is quite as satisfactory as a preparatory study as German or French. We have encouraged the establishment of Scandinavian courses in communities where the Norse people predominate" (Registrar). In the University of Minnesota the Scandinavian languages are accepted absolutely on a par with German and French; that is a student may offer Scandinavian or German or French to meet the foreign language requirement.

Something between the two extremes is perhaps advisable in the present state of the growth of the study. There is no doubt that the new languages are at a disadvantage at present as compared with the languages that have long been taught in the high schools. There are grammars of Scandinavian written in English, but they are pedagogically not as good as the best that are available in German and French. And there are as yet few texts edited and annotated for class-room use in secondary schools. Also the supply of trained teachers for these languages is at present not large; there will be more each year, but a rapidly growing demand could not at present be taken care of. It is important to bear in mind that it is not merely a question of getting the language introduced, but

also the much more important problem of taking care of it after it has been introduced.

The recognition that the universities will give can only be such as will be in accord with their standards of admission. The Scandinavian languages will as a matter of course be accepted as entrance credit from accredited schools, there can be no doubt of that. But the work must be acceptably taught and is subject to the same state and university inspections as the other languages. If the language is to have entrance-credit value as training in language it must have been studied two years, but even a one-year course should be accepted for entrance as additional language credit, the language requirement in this case being satisfied in other languages. Where taught two years or more Scandinavian ought to be accepted for any course in the university as the second foreign language. The native Scandinavian who speaks the language as his mother tongue and who offers a four-year course in Scandinavian language and literature ought to have that accepted in lieu of the foreign language requirement. Some such rulings as these the high schools may expect in the near future probably in most of the universities in the northwestern states, and in some of the eastern universities.

GEORGE T. FLOM.

University of Illinois, Nov. 23, 1912.